



Edmund M. Sneyd Kynnersley

THE
CHASE,
AND
WILLIAM AND HELEN:
TWO BALLADS,
FROM THE
GERMAN
OF
GOTTFRIED AUGUSTUS BÜRGER.

Translated by Samuel Walter Scott

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ON the merit of the following Poems, the Translator forbears to make any remarks. To one of them the public attention has of late been attracted in an uncommon degree, by translations of various excellence; and though there are species of writing which cannot be affected by the neglect or applause of the million, popularity is, perhaps, the most unequivocal proof of the excellence of the Ballad. The two first lines of the forty-seventh stanza, in the second of

these poems, descriptive of the speed of the lovers, may perhaps bring to the recollection of many, a passage extremely similar, in a translation of *Lenora*, which first appeared in the *Monthly Magazine*. In justice to himself, the Translator thinks it his duty to acknowledge, that his curiosity was first attracted to this truly romantic story, by a Gentleman, who, having heard *Lenora* once read in manuscript, could only recollect the general outlines, and part of a couplet, which, from the singularity of its structure, and frequent recurrence, had remained impressed on his memory. If, from despair of rendering the passage so happily, the property of another has been invaded, the

Translator makes the only atonement now in his power, by restoring it thus publicly to the rightful owner.'

IN these Translations, which were written before any other was published, he was more anxious to convey the general effect, than to adhere very closely to the language or arrangement of the original Poems.

FOR the information of those to whom such obsolete expressions may be less familiar, it may be noticed, that the word *serf*, means a vassal ; and that to *busk* and *boune*, is to dress and prepare one's self for a journey.

THE CHASE.

I.

EARL WALTER winds his bugle horn ;
To horse, to horse, halloo, halloo !
His fiery courser snuffs the morn,
And thronging serfs their Lord pursue.

II.

The eager pack, from couples freed,
Dash through the bush, the brier, the brake ;
While answering hound, and horn, and steed,
The mountain echoes startling wake.

A

THE CHASE.

III.

The beams of God's own hallow'd day
Had painted yonder spire with gold,
And, calling sinful man to pray,
Loud, long, and deep the bell had toll'd.

IV.

But still Earl Walter onward rides ;
Halloo, halloo, and hark again !
When, spurring from opposing sides,
Two stranger horsemen join the train,

V.

Who was each stranger, left and right,
Well may I guess, but dare not tell :
The right-hand steed was silver white,
The left, the swarthy hue of hell.

THE CHASE.

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VI.

The right-hand horseman, young and fair,
His smile was like the morn of May ;
The left, from eye of tawny glare,
Shot midnight lightning's lurid ray.

VII.

He wav'd his huntsman's cap on high,
Cry'd, " Welcome, welcome, noble Lord !
" What sport can earth, or sea, or sky,
" To match the princely chase, afford ? "

VIII.

" Cease thy loud bugle's clanging knell,"
Cry'd the fair youth, with silver voice ;
" And for Devotion's choral swell
" Exchange the rude discordant noise.

A ij

THE CHASE.

IX.

“ To-day th’ ill-omen’d chase forbear ;
 “ Yon bell yet summons to the fane :
 “ To-day the warning spirit hear,
 “ To-morrow thou may’st mourn in vain.”

X.

“ Away, and sweep the glades along !” .
 The sable hunter hoarse replies ;
 “ To muttering Monks leave matin song,
 “ And bells, and books, and mysteries.”

XI.

Earl Walter spurr’d his ardent steed,
 And, launching forward with a bound,
 “ Who for thy drowsy priestlike rede
 “ Would leave the jovial horn and hound ?

XII.

“ No ! pious fool, I scorn thy lore ;
“ Let him who ne’er the chase durst prove
“ Go join with thee the droning choir,
“ And leave me to the sport I love.”

XIII.

Fast, fast Earl Walter onward rides,
O’er moss and moor, o’er holt and hill,
And onward fast on either side
The stranger horsemen follow’d still,

XIV.

Up springs, from yonder tangled thorn,
A stag more white than mountain snow ;
And louder rung Earl Walter’s horn,
“ Hark forward, forward, holla, ho !”

XV.

A heedless wretch has cross'd the way,—
He gasps the thundering hoofs below ;
But, live who can, or die who may,
Still forward, forward ! On they go.

XVI.

See where yon simple fences meet,
A field with Autumn's blessings crown'd ;
See prostrate at Earl Walter's feet
A husbandman with toil embrown'd.

XVII.

“ O mercy ! mercy ! noble Lord ;
“ Spare the hard pittance of the poor,
“ Earn'd by the sweat these brows have pour'd
“ In scorching July's fultry hour.”

XVIII.

Earnest the right-hand stranger pleads,
The left still cheering to the prey :
Th' impetuous Earl no warning heeds,
But furious holds the onward way.

XIX.

“ Away, thou hound, so basely born,
“ Or dread the scourge’s echoing blow !”
Then loudly rung his bugle horn,
“ Hark forward, forward, holla, ho !”

XX.

So said, so done—a single bound
Clears the poor labourer’s humble pale :
Wild follows man, and horse, and hound,
Like dark December’s stormy gale.

XXI.

And man, and horse, and hound, and horn,
Destructive sweep the field along,
While joying o'er the wasted corn
Fell Famine marks the madd'ning throng.

XXII.

Again up rous'd the tim'rous prey
Scours moss and moor, and holt and hill ;
Hard run, he feels his strength decay,
And trusts for life his simple skill.

XXIII.

Too dangerous solitude appear'd ;
He seeks the shelter of the crowd ;
Amid the flock's domestic herd
His harmless head he hopes to shroud.

XXIV.

O'er moss and moor, and holt and hill,
His track the steady blood-hounds trace ;
O'er moss and moor, and holt and hill,
Th' unwearied Earl pursues the chase.

XXV.

The anxious herdsman lowly falls :
“ O spare, thou noble Baron, spare
“ These herds, a widow's little all,
“ These flocks, an orphan's fleecy care.”

XXVI.

Earnest the right-hand stranger pleads,
The left still cheering to the prey ;
Nor prayer nor pity Walter heeds,
But furious keeps the onward way.

XXVII.

“ Unmanner’d dog ! To stop my sport
“ Vain were thy cant and beggar whine,
“ Though human spirits of thy fort
“ Were tenants of these carrion kine !”

XXVIII.

Again he winds his bugle horn,
“ Hark forward, forward, holla, ho !”
And through the herd, in ruthless scorn,
He cheers his furious hounds to go.

XXIX.

In heaps the throttled victims fall ;
Down sinks their mangled herdsman near ;
The murd’rous cries the stag appal,
Again he starts, new-nerv’d by fear.

THE CHASE.

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XXX.

With blood besmear'd, and white with foam,
While big the tears of anguish pour,
He seeks, amid the forest's gloom,
The humble hermit's hut obscure.

XXXI.

But man and horse, and horn and hound,
Fast rattling on his traces go ;
The sacred chapel rung around
With hark away, and holla, ho !

XXXII.

All mild, amid the route profane,
The holy hermit pour'd his pray'r :
“ Forbear with blood God's house to stain,
“ Revere his altar, and forbear !

B ij

XXXIII.

“ The meanest brute has rights to plead,
“ Which, wrong’d by cruelty or pride,
“ Draw vengeance on the rufflefs head ;—
“ Be warn’d at length, and turn aside.”

XXXIV.

Still the fair horseman anxious pleads,
The black wild whooping points the prey ;
Alas ! the Earl no warning heeds,
But frantic keeps the forward way.

XXXV.

“ Holy or not, or right or wrong,
“ Thy altar and its rites I spurn ;
“ Not sainted martyrs’ sacred song,
“ Not God himself shall make me turn.”

XXXVI.

He spurs his horse, he winds his horn,
“ Hark forward, forward, holla, ho !”
But off, on whirlwind’s pinions borne,
The stag, the hut, the hermit, go.

XXXVII.

And horse and man, and horn and hound,
And clamour of the chase was gone :
For hoofs and howls, and bugle sound,
A deadly silence reign’d alone.

XXXVIII.

Wild gaz’d th’ affrighted Earl around ;—
He strove in vain to wake his horn,
In vain to call ; for not a sound
Could from his anxious lips be borne.

XXXIX.

He listens for his trusty hounds ;
No distant baying reach'd his ears ;
His courser, rooted to the ground,
The quick'ning spur unmindful bears.

XL.

Still dark and darker round it spreads,
Dark as the darkness of the grave ;
And not a sound the still invades,
Save what a distant torrent gave.

XLI.

High o'er the sinner's humbled head
At length the solemn silence broke ;
And from a cloud of swarthy red,
The awful voice of thunder spoke.

XLII.

“ Oppressor of creation fair !
“ Apostate spirits’ harden’d tool !
“ Scowler of God ! scourge of the poor !
“ The measure of thy cup is full.

XLIII.

“ Go, hunt for ever through the wood,
“ For ever roam th’ affrighted wild ;
“ And let thy fate instruct the proud
“ God’s meanest creature is his child.”

XLIV.

’Twas hush’d : one flash of sombre glare
With yellow ting’d the forests brown ;
Up rose Earl Walter’s bristling hair,
And horror chill’d each nerve and bone.

XLV.

Cold pour'd the sweat in freezing rill ;
A rising wind began to sing ;
And louder, louder, louder still,
Brought storm and tempest on its wing.

XLVI.

The earth is rock'd, it quakes, it rends ;
From yawning rifts, with many a yell,
Mix'd with sulphureous flames, ascend
The misbegotten dogs of hell.

XLVII.

What ghastly huntsman next arose,
Well may I guess, but dare not tell :
His eye like midnight lightning glows,
His steed the swarthy hue of hell.

XLVIII.

Earl Walter flies o'er bush and thorn,
With many a shriek of helpless woe ;
Behind him hound, and horse, and horn,
And hark away, and holla, ho !

XLIX.

With wild despair's reverted eye,
Close, close behind he marks the throng ;
With bloody fangs, and eager cry,
In frantic fear he scours along.

L.

Still shall the dreadful chase endure
Till time itself shall have an end ;
By day earth's tortured womb they scour,
At midnight's witching hour ascend.

LI.

This is the horn, and hound, and horse,
That oft the late~~d~~ peasant hears :
Appal'd he signs the frequent cross,
When the wild din invades his ears.

LII.

The wakeful priest oft drops a tear
For human pride, for human woe,
When at his midnight mass he hears
Th' infernal cry of holla, ho !

WILLIAM AND HELEN.

I.

From heavy dreams fair Helen rose
And ey'd the dawning red :
“ Alas, my love, thou tarriest long !
“ O art thou false or dead ? ”

II.

With gallant Fred'rick's princely power
He sought the bold crusade ;
But not a word from Judah's wars
Told Helen how he sped.

C ij

III.

With Paynim and with Saracen
At length a truce was made,
And ev'ry knight return'd to dry
The tears his love had shed.

IV.

Our gallant host was homeward bound
With many a song of joy ;
Green wav'd the laurel in each plume,
The badge of victory.

V.

And old and young, and fire and son,
To meet them crowd the way,
With shouts, and mirth, and melody,
The debt of love to pay.

VI.

Full many a maid her true love met,
And sobb'd in his embrace,
And flutt'ring joy in tears and smiles
Array'd full many a face.

VII.

Nor joy nor smile for Helen sad ;
She sought the host in vain ;
For none could tell her William's fate,
If faithless, or if slain.

VIII.

The martial band is past and gone ;
She rends her raven hair,
And in distraction's bitter mood
She weeps with wild despair.

IX.

“ O, rise my child,” her mother said,
“ Nor sorrow thus in vain ;
“ A perjur’d lover’s fleeting heart
“ No tears recal again.

X.

“ O mother, what is gone, is gone,
“ What’s lost, for ever lorn :
“ Death, death alone can comfort me ;
“ O had I ne’er been born !

XI.

“ O break, my heart, O break at once !
“ Drink my life-blood despair !
“ No joy remains on earth for me,
“ For me in heaven no share.”

XII.

“ O enter not in judgment, Lord !”

The pious mother prays ;

“ Impute not guilt to thy frail child !

“ She knows not what she says.

XIII.

“ O say thy pater noster child !

“ O turn to God and grace !

“ His will that turn’d thy blifs to bale

“ Can change thy bale to blifs.”

XIV.

“ O mother, mother ! What is blifs ?

“ O mother, what is bale ?

“ My William’s love was heaven on earth,

“ Without it earth is hell.

XV.

“ Why should I pray to ruthless Heav’n
“ Since my lov’d William’s slain ?
“ I only pray’d for William’s sake,
“ And all my pray’rs were vain.”

XVI.

“ O take the sacrament, my child,
“ And check these tears that flow ;
“ By resignation’s humble pray’r
“ O hallow’d be thy woe !”

XVII.

“ No sacrament can quench this fire,
“ Or slake this scorching pain :
“ No sacrament can bid the dead
“ Arise and live again.”

XVIII.

“ O break, my heart, O break at once !
“ Be thou my god, Despair !
“ Heav’n’s heaviest blow has fall’n on me,
“ And vain each fruitless pray’r.”

XIX.

“ O enter not in judgment, Lord,
“ With thy frail child of clay !
“ She knows not what her tongue has spoke ;
“ Impute it not, I pray !

XX.

“ Forbear, my child, this desp’rate woe,
“ And turn to God and grace ;
“ Well can devotion’s heav’ly glow
“ Convert thy bale to bliss.”

XXI.

“ O mother, mother, what is bliss ?
“ O mother, what is bale ?
“ Without my William what were heav’n,
“ Or with him what were hell ?”

XXII.

Wild she arraigns th’ eternal doom,
Upbraids each sacred pow’r,
Till spent, she sought her silent room
All in the lonely tower.

XXIII.

She beat her breast, she wrung her hands,
Till fun and day were o’er,
And through the glimm’ring lattice shone
The twinkling of the star.

XXIV.

Then crash ! the heavy draw-bridge fell,
That o'er the moat was hung ;
And clatter ! clatter ! on its boards
The hoof of courser rung.

XXV.

The clank of echoing steel was heard
As off the rider bounded ;
And slowly on the winding stair
A heavy footstep sounded.

XXVI.

And hark ! and hark ! a knock—Tap ! tap !
A rustling stifled noise ;—
Door latch and tinkling staples ring ;—
At length a whisp'ring voice.

XXVII.

“ Awake, awake, arise my love !

“ How, Helen, dost thou fare ?

“ Wak’st thou, or sleep’st ? laugh’st thou, or weep’st ?

“ Hast thought on me my fair ?”

XXVIII.

“ My love ! my love !—so late by night !—

“ I wak’d, I wept for thee ;

“ Much have I borne since dawn of morn ;—

“ Where, William, could’st thou be ?”

XXIX.

“ We saddled late—From Hungary

“ I rode since darkness fell ;

“ And to its bourne we both return

“ Before the matin bell.”

XXX.

“ O rest this night within my arms,
“ And warm thee in their fold !
“ Chill howls through hawthorn bush the wind ; —
“ My love is deadly cold.”

XXXI.

“ Let the wind howl through hawthorn bush !
“ This night we must away ;
“ The steed is wight, the spur is bright ;
“ I cannot stay till day.

XXXII.

“ Busk, busk, and boune ! Thou mount’st behind
“ Upon my black barb steed :
“ O’er stock and stile, a hundred miles,
“ We haste to bridal bed.”

XXXIII.

“ To-night—to-night a hundred miles!—

“ O dearest William, stay!

“ The bell strikes twelve—dark, dismal hour!

“ O wait, my love, till day!”

XXXIV.

“ Look here, look here—the moon shines clear—

“ Full fast I ween we ride;

“ Mount and away! for ere the day

“ We reach our bridal bed.

XXXV.

“ The black barb snorts, the bridle rings;

“ Haste, busk, and bounce, and seat thee!

“ The feast is made, the chamber spread,

“ The bridal guests await thee.”

XXXVI.

Strong love prevail'd : She busks, she bounes,
She mounts the barb behind,
And round her darling William's waist
Her lily arms she twin'd.

XXXVII.

And hurry ! hurry ! off they rode,
As fast as fast might be ;
Spurn'd from the courser's thundering heels
The flashing pebbles flee.

XXXVIII.

And on the right, and on the left,
Ere they could snatch a view,
Fast, fast each mountain, mead and plain,
And cot and castle flew.

XXXIX.

“ Sit fast—dost fear?—The moon shines clear—
“ Fleet rides my barb—keep hold !
“ Fear’st thou ?” “ O no !” she faintly said ;
“ But why so stern and cold ?

XL.

“ What yonder rings ? what yonder sings ?
“ Why shrieks the owlet gray ?”
“ ’Tis death bells clang, ’tis funeral song,
“ The body to the clay.

XLI.

“ With song and clang, at morrow’s dawn,
“ Ye may inter the dead :
“ To-night I ride, with my young bride,
“ To deck our bridal bed.

XLII.

“ Come with thy choir, thou coffin’d guest,
“ To fwell our nuptial song !
“ Come priest, to bless our marriage feast !
“ Come all, come all along !”

XLIII.

Ceas’d clang and song ; down sunk the bier ;
The shrouded corpse arose ;
And hurry, hurry ! all the train
The thund’ring steed pursues.

XLIV.

And forward ! forward ! on they go ;
High snorts the straining steed ;
Thick pants the rider’s labouring breath,
As headlong on they speed.

XLV.

" O William, why this savage haste ?

" And where thy bridal bed ?"

" 'Tis distant far." " Still short and stern ?"

" 'Tis narrow, trustless maid."

XLVI.

" No room for me ?" " Enough for both ;—

" Speed, speed, my Barb, thy course."

O'er thund'ring bridge, through boiling surge,

He drove the furious horse.

XLVII.

Tramp ! tramp ! along the land they rode ;

Splash ! splash ! along the sea ;

The steed is wight, the spur is bright,

The flashing pebbles flee.

XLVIII.

Fled past on right and left how fast

Each forest, grove and bower ;

On right and left fled past how fast

Each city, town and tower.

XLIX.

“ Dost fear ? dost fear ?—The moon shines clear ;—

“ Dost fear to ride with me ?—

“ Hurrah ! hurrah ! The dead can ride !”

“ O William let them be !

L.

“ See there, see there ! What yonder swings

“ And creaks 'mid whistling rain ?”

“ Gibbet and steel, th' accursed wheel ;

“ A murd'rer in his chain.

LI.

“ Hollo ! thou felon, follow here :
“ To bridal bed we ride ;
“ And thou shalt prance a fetter dance
“ Before me and my bride.”

LII.

And hurry, hurry ! clash, clash, clash !
The wasted form descends ;
And fleet as wind through hazel bush
The wild career attends.

LIII.

Tramp ! tramp ! along the land they rode,
Splash ! splash ! along the sea ;
The scourge is red, the spur drops blood,
The flashing pebbles flee.

LIV.

How fled what moonshine faintly show'd !

How fled what darkness hid !

How fled the earth beneath their feet,

The heav'n above their head !

LV.

" Dost fear ? dost fear ? The moon shines clear,

" And well the dead can ride ;

" Does faithful Helen fear for them ?"

" O leave in peace the dead !"

LVI.

" Barb ! Barb ! methinks I hear the cock ;

" The sand will soon be run :

" Barb ! Barb ! I smell the morning air ;

" The race is well nigh done."

LVII.

Tramp ! tramp ! along the land they rode,
Splash ! splash ! along the sea ;
The scourge is red, the spur drops blood,
The flashing pebbles flee.

LVIII.

“ Hurrah ! hurrah ! well ride the dead ;
“ The bride, the bride is come !
“ And soon we reach the bridal bed,
“ For, Helen, here’s my home.”

LIX.

Reluctant on its rusty hinge
Revolv’d an iron door,
And by the pale moon’s setting beam
Were seen a church and tow’r.

LX.

With many a shriek and cry whiz round
The birds of midnight, scared ;
And rustling like autumnal leaves
Unhallow'd ghosts were heard.

LXI.

O'er many a tomb and tomb-stone pale
He spurr'd the fiery horse,
Till sudden at an open grave
He check'd the wond'rous course.

LXII.

The falling gauntlet quits the rein,
Down drops the casque of steel,
The cuirass leaves his shrinking side,
The spur his gory heel.

LXIII.

The eyes desert the naked skull,
The mould'ring flesh the bone,
Till Helen's lily arms entwine
A ghastly skeleton.

LXIV.

The furious Barb snorts fire and foam ;
And with a fearful bound
Dissolves at once in empty air,
And leaves her on the ground.

LXV.

Half seen by fits, by fits half heard,
Pale spectres fleet along ;
Wheel round the maid in dismal dance,
And howl the fun'ral song :

WILLIAM AND HELEN.

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LXVI.

“ E'en when the heart's with anguish cleft,

“ Revere the doom of Heav'n.

“ Her soul is from her body reft;

“ Her spirit be forgiv'n !”

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